

**Abstract**

1       A technique for providing telecommunications service is disclosed that uses a test bus to test  
2 customer subscriber lines and to provide a connection between a customer subscriber line and  
3 transmission equipment, which handles outbound backup calls. This backup transmission equipment  
4 can be inexpensively retrofitted into switches and remote terminal equipment in the field. The  
5 illustrative embodiment of the present invention comprises: a plurality of customer subscriber lines; a  
6 metallic test bus that can be electrically connected to any of the plurality of customer subscriber lines;  
7 drop test logic for testing at least one electrical characteristic of any of the plurality of customer  
8 subscriber lines via the metallic test bus; and transmission equipment for providing  
9 telecommunications service to any of the plurality of customer subscriber lines via the metallic test  
10 bus.